

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0499

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A E L MANKOUA 3168

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, PINT, PFOR, NU

SUBJECT: GRANANDA NAMES PLAZA AFTER GEORGE WASHINGTON

1. DURING A SHORT CEREMONY ON THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 4, ALVARO CHAMORRO MORA, CONSERVATIVE MAYOR OF GRANADA, UNVEILED A DIGNIFIED COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE NAMING A NEWLY BUILT PLAZA IN THE CITY OF GRANADA AFTER GEORGE WASHINGTON. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME A NICARAGUAN CITY HAS NAMED A PLAZA AFTER AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT. MAYOR CHAMORRO DEDICATED THE PLAZA TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF GRANADA, AS A BICENTENNIAL GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP AND APPRECIATION. THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY WAS ATTENDED BY SEVERAL HUNDRED GRANADINOS, INCLUDING GRANADA CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS, THE AMBASSADOR AND MRS. THEBERGE, THE PAO AND CAO. IN A BRIEF SPEECH, THE AMBASSADOR THANKED THE MAYOR AND PEOPLE OF GRANADA FOR THE NOBLE ACT OF NAMING A PLAZA AFTER OUR FIRST AND REVERED PRESIDENT.

2. FOLLOWING THE CEREMONY, THE MAYOR OF GRANADA AND MRS. CHAMORRO MORA HOSTED A LARGE BICENTENNIAL RECEPTION IN HONOR OF THE AMBASSADOR AND MRS. THEBERGE AT WHICH MAYOR CHAMORRO EXTOLLED GEORGE WASHINGTON'S INTEGRITY AND HONESTY. HE LAMENTED

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THE LACK OF SUCH CIVIC VIRTUES IN NICARAGUA BUT CLAIMED

THAT IT STILL EXISTED IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND "PROBABLY" IN THE LIBERAL PARTY.

3. COMMENT: ASIDE FROM ANY INCIDENTAL ALTRUISTIC MOTIVES, THE GRANADA CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS (IN PARTICULAR, MAYOR ALVARO CHAMORRO) NO DOUBT HOPE THAT THE DEDICATION OF PLAZA WASHINGTON, THE RECEPTION AFTERWARDS, AND ATTENDANT PUBLICITY WILL BOLGSTER THEIR POLITICAL FORTUNES BY DEMONSTRATING THEIR GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. EMBASSY AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. MAYOR CHAHLRRKH IS PRESENTLY IN A STRUGGLE FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (HE ASPIRES TO THE PRESIDENCY) AND HE PROBABLY BELIEVES THAT HIS SPONSORSHIP OF PLAZA WASHINGTON AND THE RECEPTION WILL HELP HIM TOWARDS THIS GOAL. WHATEVER THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THESE POLITICAL CALCULATIONS, PLAZA WASHINGTON CLEARLY IS A TRIBUTE TO THE MORE EVEN-HANDED U.S. POLICY INPLEMENTED BY THE EMBASSY OVER THE PAST TEN MONTHS, A POLICY RECOGNIZED AND APPRECIATED BY VARIOUS CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND OTHER OPPOSITION FACTIONS.

4. SINCE ALL ACTS INVOLVING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ARE BELIEVED LOCALLY TO BE PREGNANT WITH POLITICAL MEANING, THE PLAZA WASHINGTON CEREMONY AND THE MAYOR'S RECEPTION WILL LIKELY BE INTERPRETED AS A U.S. EMBASSY TILT TOWARDS THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (GRANADA FACTION) AND AWAY FROM THE SOMOZA REGIME. PRESIDENT SOMOZA IS ALREADY INURED TO THE MORE OPEN, BALANCED POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE AMBASSADOR, ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT. NEVERTHELESS, AT THE JULY 4 RECEPTION AT THE RESIDENCE, SOMOZA TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE WAS PLEASED THAT THE CITY OF GRANADA HAD NAMED A PLAZA AFTER WASHINGTON AND REGRETTEED THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND THE MAYOR'S RECEPTION FOLLOWING THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY. THEBERGE

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